Storm Water Utility
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How will I be billed for this?
If adopted, the Stormwater Utility fee would be added to the monthly utility billings that the City sends out to each property owner. The Stormwater Utility fee would appear on the bill similar to the city's billing for sanitary sewer and water services.

What is my Stormwater Utility fee?
The City is currently proposing a monthly fee of $2 per household. Fees for non-residential lots will be determined based on the size and Residential Equivalent Factor (REF) for each parcel. Information on rates will be available at the March 19th public informational meeting or by contacting the City.

What do other cities charge as a Stormwater Utility fee?
Similar sized cities in Southeastern Minnesota that have Stormwater Utilities charge each household an average fee of $3.76 per month. The monthly household fees varied from $1.00 to $9.00.

How has the City paid for stormwater related costs in the past?
Funds for administrative, maintenance, and permit related activities have been funded through the City's general fund. Costs for replacing existing storm drainage systems are typically part of the assessment when a street improvement occurs.

Will the Stormwater Utility fees cover all of the City's stormwater needs?
No. The Stormwater Utility fees are expected to cover most, but not all of the City's stormwater funding needs. It is projected that the $2 base fee will generate approximately $186,670 for the City each year.

Shouldn't developers pay for their storm sewer systems?
Parties that develop property within the City of Cannon Falls are required to pay for stormwater improvements for their development. These improvements include stormwater ponds, catch basins, and storm sewer pipes. This practice of requiring developers to pay for new infrastructure will continue after the Stormwater Utility fee is adopted. Once land is developed the owner of the parcel will be subject to the Stormwater Utility fee.

Why do I have to pay another tax?
The Stormwater Utility is not a tax. The Stormwater Utility is considered by many to be a fair and equitable method of funding stormwater related infrastructure because it charges based on the amount of stormwater runoff contributed to the City's storm drainage system. This fee should help reduce the amount of future assessments because repairs and improvements to the storm sewer components will be funded by this Utility.

Will the fee reduce my property taxes or amounts I am assessed?
The fee will not result in a noticeable and direct change in the amount of the property tax owed on you property. The fee is a way for the City to help pay for increased stormwater regulations and to maintain its existing systems. Over time, the fee is expected to help reduce future property tax increases and assessments that would have been needed to cover these items.

Will the fees be used for other city projects like trails, new buildings, or other non-stormwater needs?
No. The Stormwater Utility funds are dedicated only for stormwater management program activities specified by the Stormwater Utility Ordinance. Accounting systems will be used to track the amount of money generated through the Utility and how the money is spent.

Will the City provide credits or reductions in the fee for on-site stormwater controls or best management practices (BMPs)?
Yes, the City will be providing credits to reduce the fee for individual parcels if they have constructed on-site BMPs or stormwater controls (rain gardens, infiltration areas, etc).

I have a small residential lot. Why is my fee the same as a larger lot?
A sampling of various residential lots within the City of Cannon Falls determined that the typical lot size was approximately .38 acres and approximately 25 percent of the lot was impervious surface. Various lot sizes and locations within the City were reviewed and the lot size and impervious fraction were found to be insignificant in terms of variations in the amount of stormwater runoff. It would also be excessive and expensive to precisely determine the size and impervious fraction of the more than 1,700 residential lots in the City. Therefore, all residential lots will be charged the same base residential fee.

How is the fee for my parcel calculated?
Determining The REF: The accumulated direct runoff (Q) used to determine the REFs shall be calculated based on an evaluation of the land use and application of a standardized soil type and rainfall event.

The calculated direct runoff (Q) shall be based on the runoff equation in the Soil Conservation Services (SCS) National Engineering Handbook Section 4 – Hydrology. The equation is as follows:

$$Q = \frac{(P-0.2S)^2}{P + 0.8S}$$

Where:
S = (1000/CN)-10
P = 2.0 inches (Based on a 24-hour 2-inch rainfall event)
CN = Runoff index (Based on the land use and the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS Type B soils)

The runoff indices (CN) and REFs for the various land uses within the city shall be set forth in the table below:

LAND USE	Runoff Index (CN)	REF
Single Family Residential	72	1.00
Duplexes, Twin Homes, Townhomes	72	1.00
Multi-Family Residential	85	2.72
Municipal	88	3.30
Commercial	92	4.23
Industrial	88	3.30
Institutional: Schools, Churches, Hospitals	88	3.30
Public/Government	92	4.23

The REF for Land Uses not list above shall be determined by the city based on probable hydrologic response.

Establishing Unit Rates: The City Council shall from time to time, by resolution, establish the Unit Rate. The Unit Rate so established shall be on file with the City Administrator/Clerk and shall be used to compute the charges for a given parcel of land based on the following formula:

Storm Water Charges = (UR) x (REF) x (SA)

Standardized Charges. The following rules shall apply for all purpose of simplifying and equalizing charges:

1) A standard Surface Area of 0.38 acres shall be used for Single-Family Residential parcels.
2) A standard Surface Area of 0.38 acres for each unit shall be used in computing storm water charges for the following dwellings: duplexes, twin homes, townhouses, and detached townhouses. (For example, a parcel that contains four townhouse units shall have a Surface Area computed as follows: 4 units x 0.38 acres/unit = 1.52 acres).
3) Parcels subject to these standardized charges shall not be eligible for Adjustments (Credits) to Charges or Adjustments to Area as set forth elsewhere herein.

How are undeveloped parcels treated?
Undeveloped parcels will not be charged the base residential fee provided the property is maintained in a manner that controls erosion and does not cause water quality problems. Once the property is developed a Stormwater Utility fee will be determined based upon use.

Get a Handle on Home Water Use

When we scan our monthly water bill and see the number of gallons we have used in the past thirty days, do we consider where in our household the water use occurred? A little insight into typical home water use can shed light on how we use water and how we can take steps to use it more efficiently.

According to the *Handbook of Water Use and Conservation* by Amy Vickers, daily indoor per capita water use in the typical single family home is 69.3 gallons.

As we can see from the figures below, showers, washing clothes, flushing the toilet, leaks, and use from faucets account for over 94% of indoor use. By installing more efficient water fixtures and regularly checking for leaks, households can reduce daily per capita water use by about 35% to about 45.2 gallons per day.

The most obvious place to start to reduce water use is the toilet. Older style toilets use up to six gallons per flush. Newer toilets use under two gallons. This savings can add up to 1,000 gallons per month. A leaking toilet can also waste hundreds of gallons. Check for water running over the overflow tube inside the tank or a leaking flapper. Place some food coloring in the tank and if it shows up in the bowl, replace the flapper.

Older showers and faucets can be retrofitted with a water saving disk placed in the shower head or spout. Newer faucets are manufactured to a water-saving standard.

Washing clothes accounts for 22% of in-home use and can be one of the more expensive items to tame. Older models can use 40 gallons per load. Efficient clothes washers use only 18-25 gallons per load and can be much more expensive making the payback time longer.

A dripping faucet can waste hundreds of gallons per month and is generally an easy fix.

You can also save water by taking some basic steps with everyday water use. When washing dishes by hand or when brushing your teeth, do not leave the water running. Fully load the dishwasher before running. Defrost frozen food in the refrigerator instead of running hot water over the food.

Controlling leaks and using water more efficiently can cut your water use by 35%. You save money on your bill and your water system saves investment in water treatment and delivery facilities.

Here is how is breaks down:

Use	Gallons Per Capita
Showers	11.6
Clothes Washers	15.0
Dishwashers	1.0
Toilets	18.5
Baths	1.2
Leaks	9.5
Faucets	10.9
Other Domestic Uses	1.6